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HELLER FAMILY HISTORY.

W. J. HELLER,
EASTON, PA.

GENEALOGY OF
CHRISTOPHER HELLER AND HIS
SIX SONS.

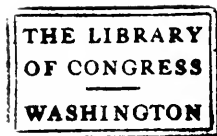
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Paper Read by W. J. Heller at the Fifth
Reunion of the Heller Family Asso-
ciation at Island Park, Easton,
Pa., August 29, 1908.

Gently gliding down the sunny slope of Lehigh mountain on a south bound electric car, one is very much impressed with the extensive view to the south, also to the east and to the west, a magnificent panoramic display of fertile cultivation. The eastern end of the long valley which stretches southwesterly to the southernmost part of Pennsylvania, is known as the greatest productive valley in the world.

Blind, indeed, to the perfections of God's handiwork in nature, and inlets to a sluggish soul, must be the eyes that fail to see, or that grow weary of resting upon the beauties of the landscape which is here unfolded to view.

Far down in this valley of the Saucons, nestling in a well chosen place, just on the east boundary of the charming village of Seidersville, in Lower Saucon township, Northampton county, is an ancient log house, a pretentious habitation even long after the log cabin days, a mute reminder of the times fast being forgotten, the period when the red man held undisputed sway and the white man was the interloper. Constructed purposely to withstand an onslaught of the wily Indian, a snug domicile standing some distance from the mountain foot hills, a place selected probably to avoid surprises from any lurking enemy, it was a safe retreat after a hard day's toil. This old

log house and plantation, known by the title of "Delay," was the American home of Christopher Heller, who landed at Philadelphia, September 5, 1738. The tract upon which he erected this log cabin was his original purchase of 176 acres under warrant dated September 8, 1742. Here he resided until the end of his days.

Christopher Heller, aged 50, and his son Simon, aged 17, were passengers on the good ship "Winter Galley," from Rotterdam, September 5, 1738. Whether any other members of the family were included among the passengers is unknown. All research to the present time, establishes the family only as the father and six sons. The oldest of these was John Dieter, much of whose life is yet shrouded in oblivion. We find his name on the books of the Durham Furnace in various vocations. At one time he was a teamster for the company and transported cannon balls to Philadelphia during the revolution. He enlisted at Germantown in Captain Calboun's company. Tenth Pennsylvania line, served four years and was discharged in 1781. He was a pensioner as late as 1818, when he was living in Luzerne county. Tradition among his descendants, who principally inhabit the country around the Susquehanna, is to the effect that he took up a large tract of land, about ten miles southeast of Sunbury on the road leading to Pottsville, he having accepted the land allotted to veterans who served in the Revolutionary war, in payment for their services, from which he was ejected owing to a prior claim of some former purchaser, when he removed to some other place. Unfortunately, the genealogy of this line has never been chronicled. The Hellers living in and around

these same regions are the descendants of several of his other brothers, principally of Daniel. Rev. A. J. Heller, of Connellsville, Pa., and some of the Hellers in and around Williamsport, are descendants.

Simon, the Second Son of Christopher Heller.

The second son of Christopher was Simon, the fellow passenger of his father. Simon took up a tract of land on warrant dated October 3, 1746, on which he built a saw mill. This was a parcel of 25 acres belonging to a larger tract along the Saucon creek, at the southern boundary of what is now Hellertown and known as Wagner's mill. The other part of the tract was on the west side of the creek and south of the wagon road and contained 150 acres. To this, Simon added in the year 1749, 40 acres more, making a total number of 215 acres in this one tract. Simon also built an addition to the saw mill in which he ground grain. This mill tract, after several transfers, passed into the hands of the Wagners in the year 1771, and is still controlled by them. Simon and also his father were active members of the Chestnut Hill Reformed church in Upper Milford township, now the most southern part of Lehigh county. After taking up his abode on Saucon creek, he was instrumental in organizing the Lower Saucon Reformed congregation which, prior to his time, held their services in private houses and principally at the house of George Hartzell. Their burying ground was the ancient cemetery at what is now the Lime Kiln school house, immediately west of the furnace near Hellertown. He was the first trustee of the congregation

and purchased the book in which the first records of the congregation were kept, wherein he entered the names of his father and all of the sons, also all the baptisms in the Heller family prior to the year 1756.

Simon, in 1764, conveyed his mill site to Blasius Beyer and the farm to Christian Bachman, removing with his entire family to Plainfield township, where he purchased at sheriff's sale a large tract of land of some 600 acres on which was a saw mill and a hotel, now the Woodley house at Wind Gap. He was a prime mover in organizing the Plainfield Reformed congregation. He also acted in various interests of the government in border affairs. He was the principal man in the board of viewers to lay out the road through the Wind Gap and on to Wyoming. This was the principal reason why the road was laid out to accommodate the few people living along the line. At Saylorsburg lived one of his daughters, the wife of Jacob Saylor. At Houser's Mills, lived another daughter, the wife of one of the Housers. It was over this road that Sullivan passed with his army and which he was compelled to reconstruct through the swamp known as the "Shades of Death." It is known as Sullivan's road to this day.

Simon's wife, who was Louisa Dietz, of Milford township, finally passed to the great beyond and was buried at Plainfield church. Simon, in due course of time, took unto himself a second wife, transferred all of his property to his oldest son Jacob, severed his connection with the Plainfield Reformed congregation which he helped to organize, and removed over the mountain to a plantation of some 500 or more acres which he had purchased some time pre-

vious. Simon no sooner had his house constructed on this tract when he began organizing the Reformed congregation of Hamilton township. His old log house is still standing within a few feet of the church. Of his second marriage there were a number of children, the principal one being Anthony, who became a legatee of all the properties above the mountain. The rest of the children, consequently, loved Anthony about as well as those of his first wife loved their other brother Jacob. The mountain divided the two branches of Simon's descendants and they grew up to forget the relationship existing between them. Simon died in 1783 and was buried by the side of his first wife in the cemetery adjoining the Plainfield church. His second wife lies in a neglected grave in Hamilton township churchyard. Chiseled in marble over the grave of Simon is the following inscription, "Here rests in God, Johan Simon Heller, born June 18, 1721, in Germany, at Petersheim, in Palitinate, died May 20, 1783. In his marriage he begat 16 children. He lived to see sixteen grandchildren and fifty-four great-grandchildren, and reached the age of sixty-four years, less five weeks and two days. His selected funeral text was 4th chapter Romans, 1s verse." (Then follows a German rhyme taken from a German hymn book of that date and which, translated, means as follows): "The body in the earth shall rest until the final day. Grant to me a joyful resurrection and intercession at the judgment."

I will read the will of Simon Heller to illustrate the conditions of that early period and the manner of disposing of real and personal property:

The Will of Simon Heller.

In the name of God, Amen. I, Simon Heller of Hamilton township, Northampton county, state of Pennsylvania, being weak in body, but of sound memory blessed be God, do this day, the eighteenth day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-five, make and publish this my last will and testament in manner following, that is to say—First I give and bequeath to my son Daniel Heller all my land messuage or tenement, situate in Hamilton township, Northampton county, wherein I now live, to have and to hold forever, except forty acres thereof and my son Daniel Heller shall pay therefor three hundred pounds, good and lawful money to his brothers and sisters hereafter named. And I give to my son Anthony Heller the above said forty acres land in the corner chining to Christian Willaner and Michael Roup and Melcher Bussert and the meting house, and my son Antony shall pay therefor forty pound to his brothers and sisters, and my son Antony shall have the said forty acres land forever, this is my last will and testament.

Secondly I give to my beloved wife Margareth thirty pound good and lawful money, and fifteen pound six months after my decease, and the other fifteen pound to be paid to her a year after, fourther, I give to my wife a bed stet three sheets, a new coverlet, and the old coverlet, two pillow and the chafe back, if my wife will go of or from my plantation and makes hereafter no demand of my heirs forever, I say then shall have my wife the above said sum money and not else, and if now, I Simon Heller give to my beloved wife time, twenty eight days,

after my decease to consider, and if she chose to stay on my place and live with my son Daniel Heller, or how else live on the place, then shall she my wife have yearly and every year eight bushel rye, two bushel wheat, one bushel buck-wheat, a half bushel corn, fifty pound pork and fifty pound beef, and three pound hachett flax and six pound toe, and she shall have a cow and my son Daniel or the man that lives on the place shall winter said cow so good as his own cows, and my son Daniel Heller shall build a room for my wife to live in, on one of my houses twelfe foot long and and so with the house is with a a chimony and a iron stove let in and shall her give fier wood so much as needful to the house cut small as needful, and my wife shall have no liberty to take, no body in to live with her in said room without the will of the owner of the place, and this she shall have so long she calls herself after my name, Heller, and no longer, further, it is my last will that thirty pound from my state shall be put out upon interest and remain on interest during my wifes life, and my wife Margareth shall have every year the interest of said thirty pound during her life, and she shall sell nor wast no goods, and after her deceas- all shall fall back to my heirs again but if my wife take up with the first offer that she quit my heirs and bind herselfe in writings that she will make hereafter no demand to my heirs, then she may do with her goods what she pleas, further, it is my last will and testament that all my children shall be equal heirs except a few things what will be mentioned further, my son Daniel shall have, after my deceas all my due from my sons John Hellers leas bill, said leas bill is ended now the

payments shall be paid as follows and every year the twenty seventh day of November and the beginning one thousand seven hundred and eighty eight, first to my son Jacob Heller, the second payment to my son Abraham, the third to my son Michael, the fourth to my son John Heller and then to my son Antony Heller, and then to my son Daniel Heller and then my son Simon Heller, and then to my daughter Veronica and then to my daughter Elizabeth, and then to my daughter Margareth, and then to my daughter Sarah, and then to my daughter Caty, and then to my daughter Mary, and then to my daughter Louis, further, I give to my son Antony Heller fifteen pound good lawful money for a horse saddle and bridle, and my son Simon my black handkerchief and my daughter Caty I give a long count of calico and a peticoate and two sheets of russia linen, a pewter blatter, seven shillingsworth and one dish and six pewter plates, and my daughter Mary I give trilig for a bet and jeck for to put over it, and two sheets of Russia linen Six pewter plates and one pewter platter and a pewter dish seven shillingsworth and calico for a count, and stuff for a pety Coat and one yard of fine linnen and one quarter of Cambrie and a new spinning wheel or the money therefor fourther I Simon Heller empower my son Jacob Heller to over sign and deliver my son Daniel and my son Anthony Heller the full right and title of my place here in hamilton without any fraud or further likewise I empower my son Anthony to oversign and deliver to my son Jacob all right and title belonging to the place in plainfield in said County when the Bond is paid from the year Seventeen Hundred Eighty Five. And I Simon

Heller make my son Anthony Heller overseers of this my will to take care and see the same performed according to my true intent and meaning.

In witness whereof I the said Simon Heller have to this my last will and testament set my hand and seal the day and year above written.

Signed Sealed and Delivered by the said Simon Heller as and for his last will and testament in the presents of us who were present at the signing and sealing thereof:

Melchior Bossert
Christopher Keller
Jacob Steelsmith

I Simon Heller remember yet before signing and sealing this my last will that the owner of this my place shall have the calf of said Cow after it has suckt three weeks-

Simon Heller (Seal)

Michael, the Third Son.

Michael, the third son of Christopher, was born in 1724 and died in 1803. He did not arrive in America until the year 1749, eleven years after the arrival of his father. At this time, he was 25 years old, and whether married in Europe or America is yet to be determined. His first child was born in 1751. He, in time, became known as Michael, the Elder (Alt Vater Mike). The date of his land warrant is July 31, 1750, less than a year after he arrived. The tract contained 250 acres and was the land now comprising the entire west side of the main street of Hellertown, on both sides of the creek. Its southern boundary was the road which divided it from the plantation of his brother Simon. He built thereon the old stone house standing in the corner opposite

the old covered bridge in Hellertown, now known as the Stever farm. Michael was a farmer of advanced ideas and never followed any other vocation, always conservative, honest in dealings with his fellow men. He became known as Old Father Mike in contra distinction to the other Michaels roundabout. Every family of Heller named one of their boys Michael, in his honor, and in due course of time it became necessary to designate them by some other term than Mike or Michael. Finally, there was Alt Vater Mike and his son Michael lived along the creek and was known as Creeker Mike. Then there was Michael who was owner of a pottery and his distinguished title was Hefner Mike. Michael, the oil miller, was known as Oilieh Mike, sometime earlier being known as Yunger Mike. After the next generation sprung into existence, there was another bunch of Michaels and these flourished as Creeker Mike's Mike, Oilieh Mike's Mike, Schwartz-kopf Mike and Kleiner Mike. There were more of these Michaels roundabout but they must have gotten away before another batch of names were handed out as we find nothing additional to their name Michael. Michael, the Elder, besides being responsible for all these Mikes, did service in the wars of his time. He was one of Colonel Anthony Lerch's Saueon cavalry that was the first to respond to the call for help in the Indian war in 1756 and which was the first body of armed men to reach the massacre of the Moravians above Lehigh Gap and compelled the Indians to remain above the mountains, thus saving Bethlehem, Nazareth and Easton. He was married twice, but of the names of these two wives the records are silent and probably their

identity will never be discovered. He lies buried at the Lime Kiln school house, the ancient Reformed burying ground, near Hellertown.

Daniel, the Fourth Son.

Daniel, the fourth son of Christopher, was born in 1726 and died in 1803. There is no record of his arrival, and probably he came along with his father and Simon and being under the prescribed age of sixteen years, his name would not necessarily appear in the list of the ship's passengers who took the oath of obligation. He made his home with his father and became the owner of the homestead after his father's death. He was a carpenter by trade and, probably, built the first addition to the old log house. Daniel had a son, Michael, who was the potter, and his pottery stood less than 100 feet from the rear of the house on a line with the barn. It was this Michael, the potter, who built the bake oven and the kitchen part, as much pottery and tile is to be seen in its construction. Daniel had another son named John Dieter, who farmed the plantation. Daniel was one of the first to take up a building lot in the new settlement of Hellertown. This was in 1785. His brother, Michael the Elder, about this time was converting part of his tract lying between Sancon creek and the King's Great Highway (Main street, Hellertown) into building lots, about the time of the Revolutionary war. Daniel, besides being a carpenter, was a wheelwright, purchased one of these lots, on which he erected a wheelwright shop, and this, later, passed to his son Mathias. Daniel, his son Mathias, another son, Jeremiah, and a

nephew, Daniel, son of Simon, who was a blacksmith, did an extensive business in making wagons for use in the Revolutionary army and lost considerable money thereby. Daniel's losses, however, did not prevent him from giving to each one of his children a farm, yet it is a noticeable fact that these farms are considerable smaller than those received by the children of his brother. Consequently, Mathias, who was a wheelwright, and his cousin Daniel, who was the blacksmith, moved to Hamilton township, above the mountain, in the vicinity of Buzzardsville, where Daniel participated in the division of his father, Simon's estate. Mathias migrated to Northumberland county, near Berwick, where today reside a great many of his descendants. Jeremiah finally settled in one of the valleys north of the mountain, and west of the Lehigh. Daniel, the father, and his wife are buried side by side in the cemetery adjoining the Lime Kiln school house.

The Other Sons.

Ludwig, the fifth son of Christopher, was a passenger on the ship "Eastern Branch," October 3, 1753. There is recorded a land survey in his name dated September 11, 1751, of 25 acres. This shows an application for the land almost two years prior to his arrival. Evidently his father and brothers prepared a home for him in advance. Of Ludwig we know but little. He also did service for the Durham furnace and afterwards was found in Bucks county, later in Hamilton township, now Monroe county, where he died in 1807 and is buried at Hamilton church.

The sixth son of Christopher was

Christopher, Junior. He was born in 1731 and at the age of twenty years he sailed for America, arriving on the ship "Duke of Bedford," in 1751. The ship's register contains also the name of Henrich Heller but so far it has been impossible to resurrect any one of that name, during that period or many years afterwards. Probably it was an error and meant Holler, as we find the name of Henrich Holler during that period. Or it may have meant Henrietta. Future research will probably furnish a clue. Names also underwent a change after a few years residence in America and we find Peter and Jacob living around the neighborhood with the rest of these Heller families, and, possibly, later investigations will bring to light, relationship as a cousin or even an older brother but until such time as might disclose that which now appears strange, we deem it best to continue with John Dieter as the oldest and Christopher Junior as the youngest of the six sons of Christopher. The time of their arrival in America is now well established and but little can be added. A commendable feature which is remarkable for that period was the solicitude displayed for the welfare of each member of the family. Choice tracts of land were selected for the absent ones, one noticeable instance being the purchase of a plantation two years before the arrival of one of the boys. The details in their land transactions as found in transfers of deeds make very interesting reading. The original homestead was deeded by Christopher, the father, to Daniel and Christopher. Another tract was secured in Milford township for three other sons and Simon was amply provided for in his original purchase. Later, Daniel be-

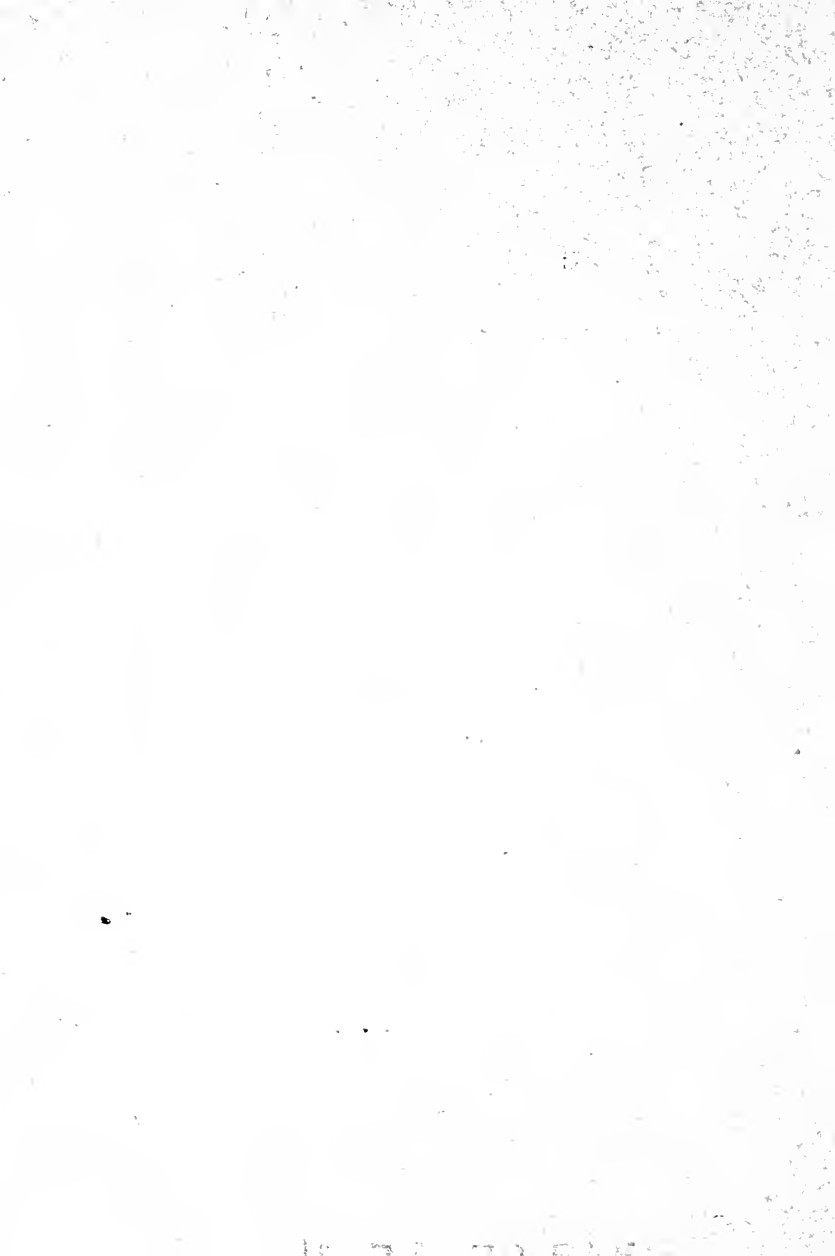
came sole owner of the homestead, having purchased the claim of his brother Christopher. The Milford township plantation was disposed of and all the boys settled along Saucon creek. Simon had already settled on both sides of the creek south of what is now Hellertown. Michael took up his 200 acre tract on the west side and Christopher on the east side. The King's Highway, now Main street, Hellertown, was the dividing line between the two latter. John Dieter and Ludwig both lived on adjoining property to the west and Daniel, having disposed of his plantation to one of his sons, by name John Dieter, Junior, entered into a business enterprise as builder and wagonmaker, some time prior to the Revolutionary war and thus began the Hellertown of today.

Making Settlements Elsewhere.

Here, then, was the multiplication of the Heller family in America. The expansion, eventually became so great and their desire to acquire vast tracts of territory between them led to migration which proved such a satisfactory condition of affairs that there was almost a depopulation of Saucon Valley. The exodus was to all the civilized parts of the land, and these Hellers, possessing acres by the hundreds, became scattered. Simon was the first to leave, with his entire family of children and grandchildren, to the north. Then Ludwig and his family moved southward. Others moved eastward. Great numbers of them located in Ohio, Wisconsin, Indiana, and a second migration landed some of these in Iowa and Illinois. Others finally settled in the northeastern counties of Pennsylvania and Upper

Jersey. A noticeable feature of this migration is that they located in colonies by themselves. We, therefore, frequently find settlements in various states, now known by the name of Heller and their names pass into memory in the valleys of the Saucon.

The energy, thriftiness and intelligence as shown in the records left behind by these grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the original Christopher, is of surprising interest. Nearly all of them had a knowledge of milling in some capacity and there is more truth than supposed in the old saying, that it was generally understood by those who traveled in the northern counties of Pennsylvania, that every first class mill site was owned by a Heller or by some one married to a Heller. Christopher's youngest son, Christopher, Jr., was probably responsible for the greater part of this condition of affairs, as his chief aim in life appears to have been to establish every one of his children and grandchildren in a mill. It made no difference whether it was a grist mill, oil or saw mill, only so ~~it~~ was a mill. After he had them all supplied he moved to a point opposite Belvidere along the Delaware river, became married a second time, raised another family of children and finally died while supplying this second crop of children with mill sites. His descendants are found around milling centres in Pike, Monroe and Wayne counties, upper part of Northampton and Northumberland in Pennsylvania. He was also well represented in Wisconsin. Christopher, Jr., died in 1805 and is buried at Stone Church, Upper Mount Bethel township, Northampton county, Penna.





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